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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAPE TOWN 000035

SIPDIS

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TAGS: SF PGOV

SUBJECT: HOLOMISA CLAIMS UDM DOING WELL, REALISTIC ABOUT CHANCES

¶1. (SBU) Summary: United Democratic Movement (UDM) President Bantu Holomisa told members of the diplomatic corps that his party is poised to perform as well as it did in the 2004 election, when it won 9 parliamentary seats. Holomisa met with diplomats for breakfast on February 10 in Cape Town.

The UDM leader said the party's support has not grown substantially during the past five years and that it has not faltered since the formation of the Congress of the People (COPE). Assessing that the UDM would not pick up significant support shows the UDM leader is realistic about his party's chances for success at the polls. End Summary.

Holomisa in Election Mode

¶2. (SBU) UDM President Bantu Holomisa and his top advisers met with the diplomatic corps on February 10 in Cape Town. Holomisa thanked the international community for its continued support for democracy in South Africa and noted that the upcoming election will be more important than any election since 1994. He then turned to his projections for how each party would perform in the election. He said a few months ago he would have projected COPE to win between 20 and 30 percent of the vote. He noted, "I see them now getting between 10 and 15 percent. They are losing momentum because there is little difference between the ANC (African National Congress), UDM, and COPE." He thought that COPE would do well in Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, and Limpopo, but was less convinced about the rest of the country. He said several times throughout his remarks that he is hoping that COPE does well at the polls because he "has a soft spot for them."

¶3. (SBU) Holomisa said it is clear that the ANC will lose its two-thirds majority in Parliament. However, he made it clear that the ruling party would not lose its hold on power completely. He said, "Forty to fifty percent of the country's population disapproves of (ANC President Jacob) Zuma becoming a national leader." Yet, he noted that what helps the ANC is that as voters splinter to other parties or elect not to vote, all the ANC must do is turn out its core supporters. He judged that the ANC would turn out its core supporters for this election. Holomisa said, "The ANC will do well in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga. They will keep many of their core supporters."

¶4. (SBU) The UDM leader assessed the Democratic Alliance (DA) would win the Western Cape based on the fact that Helen Zille is so popular. He said that having her as a leader helps the DA even though many still view it as a "white party." He thought the DA would do well in some metropolitan areas and largely retain its core support. On the Independent Democrats (ID), Holomisa reflected that the party would have support in Western Cape and Northern Cape. He said, "The ID and the UDM are on about equal footing."

¶5. (SBU) Holomisa proclaimed that the UDM's support appears to be holding steady from the previous national election. He noted that "our membership is intact, which is a good sign."

He assessed his party would perform well in Eastern Cape, but would have difficulty elsewhere in the country. Holomisa said that funding was the primary reason why the UDM has been unable to grow in recent years and urged the international community to fund political parties across the board to help level the playing field in South Africa. He said that the party would consider forming coalitions after the election results are announced "if forming an alliance makes sense." According to the UDM leadership, it makes most sense for the party to seek a partnership with COPE. However, presently there have not been talks about such a relationship.

¶16. (SBU) Holomisa closed the luncheon by again thanking the international community for all it has done in South Africa. He then requested that the diplomatic corps do its utmost to ensure free and fair voting at the polls. He said, "We do not see violence being much of an issue for this election. What worries us is how the ANC may intimidate voters by not allowing the opposition to have space."

Comment

¶17. (SBU) Holomisa's remarks underscore how the UDM leader is realistic about his party's chances for success at the polls. The UDM appears to have little chance of success beyond Eastern Cape, but Holomisa's sentiments about COPE suggest both parties may be willing to work toward a common future if such an arrangement is politically advantageous.

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